

CONVERSATION WITH A FUNDAMENTAL BAPTIST TEXTUAL CRITIC: *THOSE WHO BELIEVE THERE ARE NO ERRORS IN THEIR BIBLE ARE CALLED DANGEROUS HERETICS*

January 8, 2002 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) –

In recent days I have carried on a little e-mail conversation with a fundamental Baptist textual critic. He is on the staff of the Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary and participated in the video titled “Fundamentalism and the Word of God” that was published by the misnamed Coalition for the Defense of the Scriptures. The participants were from Bob Jones University, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, among others.

The conversation began with the following question from this professor. (I have edited my replies in minor ways for publication.) --

DETROIT PROFESSOR: “I would like to ask you a question about your position in relation to your discussion of King James-only, which you do not directly address. Do you believe the King James Version has any errors in it, either as originally given in 1611 or in the current editions?”

REPLY FROM BROTHER CLOUD: I’ve answered that many times. See the articles at my web site. There are difficulties with what I believe about the TR and the KJV and I cannot answer all of the questions and have never claimed to, but I will take my difficulties any day over those created by the position held by the Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary through following the heresy of modern textual criticism.

DETROIT PROFESSOR: “The reason I ask the question about errors in the KJV is because you seem not to like the fact that your position is often labeled KJV-only. From what I know of your position, you would say that there are no errors in the present KJV. My point in asking you to definitely state your position is that you are not being honest in your position statements. It is not honest to hide behind the word ‘difficulties’ when, in fact, your position is flatly contradictory. Your position requires you to accept unquestionable contractions of fact. If our present KJV is without error, your position is, in fact, KJV-only. How can it be anything else? If your present KJV is without error, anything that disagrees with it is in error. ‘Things that are different cannot be the same,’ to use a well-known slogan in the KJV-only camp. But if our present KJV is without error then the 1611 KJV has errors. This is easily proven, and I am sure you are aware of these differences. It is not honest to say or imply, as you clearly do, that our present KJV and the 1611 are really the same. I can demonstrate these difference, but I am sure you must be aware of these factual differences between editions of the KJV. Certainly they are close, but close is not identity. Also there are differences between the KJV and the underlying TR. I am sure you are aware of this since Hills points them out in one of his books. It is not honest to say or imply, as you clearly do, that the KJV and the TR are identical. If one is without error the other is not. Saying that there are ‘difficulties’ is simply hiding the truth. True, these points are ‘difficulties’ for your position which, as I understand it, wants to say or imply that the TR, the 1611 KJV, and the present KJV are all the same inerrant Word of God. But if anyone of these or all of these has an error or errors it is not inerrant. If any of these have differences of fact from one another, which they clearly do, then one or all cannot be inerrant. It does no good to protest that your position has less ‘difficulties’ than that of Detroit Baptist

Theological Seminary. Either something is inerrant or has errors--there is no middle ground. If someone claims that the TR has no errors, he is de facto TR-only. If someone claims that the 1611 KJV has no errors, he is de facto KJV(1611)-only. If someone claims that the current edition of the KJV(1769) has no errors, he is de facto KJV(1769)-only. Why don't you just be honest and admit what you believe instead of hiding behind the word 'difficulties'?"

BROTHER CLOUD: As for errors in the KJV, I can only speak from my personal experience, and from that I can say that I have never found one. There are many things that could be translated differently and there are minor textual choices within the TR family that could have been made, but I don't see those things as errors.

I do not accept the term KJV-only for the simple fact that I do not believe the KJV has replaced the Greek and Hebrew. I accept good Received Text translations in any language. When translations are made, I want to see them based on the Greek and Hebrew when possible (there are not always qualified translators available in some parts of the world who can use the Greek and Hebrew well) and not merely upon the KJV. I reject Ruckman's position of the KJV being advanced revelation in any sense. The KJV is my authority as an English speaker, but the "final authority" is the text from which the KJV was translated. I did not myself pursue Greek and Hebrew diligently, which I have often regretted, but I am encouraging my youngest son to do so. He began studying Greek when he was still in High School. I want to see him STUDY the Greek and Hebrew text, not CRITICIZE it.

You and your friends refuse to make a clear distinction between Ruckmanism and what I believe. That is dishonest, but it is a great debate tactic and it appears to me that your goal above all is to win a debate.

I believe modern textual criticism is rank heresy, because it is NOT predicated upon faith in divine preservation. Tischendorf represents the other fathers of modern textual criticism when he defined his work as "the struggle to regain the original form of the New Testament." On the other hand, Bible believers in that day did not think the original form of the New Testament had been lost, and they were busy obeying the Bible by preaching the gospel and planting churches instead of trying to recover the "lost" Scriptures through naturalistic principles that were adopted from the secular field.

As for the questions, I don't believe I have to answer all of them. It is a faith issue, just as it is pertaining to the nature of the Scripture. The modernists have always mocked those who accept the Scripture as the infallible Word of God by faith rather than dealing with the 'record.' They treat you the same way you treat me. I believe the textual critics are committing the same error as the modernists. I see little difference between higher and lower criticism, and that is something about which I have done a lot of study. My faith is in a God who promised to preserve the Scriptures. I am glad that I am not in a position to spend my precious fleeting earthly time fussing with and mocking those few men today who still believe in a preserved Bible.

DETROIT PROFESSOR: "It is hard to believe you can say you never found an error in the KJV when Hills points them out. Let me give you an example. In Acts 19:20 the KJV has 'God' ('So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed'). The Trinitarian Bible Society Greek New Testament has 'Lord' (*kuriou*). Now either the KJV is in error or the TR is in error. Don't tell me it is a 'difficulty'; I know it is a difficulty. The question is: which one is in error--the KJV or the TR?"

BROTHER CLOUD: I appreciate Dr. Hills' position on almost every point. He certainly nailed the position held by your school. Unlike you and other fundamentalist brethren who are would-be textual critics, he was fully credentialed in that field from Harvard, but he wisely rejected textual criticism of the modern variety and based his position on faith in God's promises instead. For that, he was viciously maligned by his peers, but he bravely bore that stigma for the truth's sake. I praise the Lord for him. He was a great help to me when I first began looking into this subject for myself as a young missionary. Back in the 1950s, Hill had already answered most of the myths promulgated by the defenders of the modern versions. But if I agree with Hills that there might be a couple of errors in the KJV does that mean I am no longer a Ruckmanite in your book?

DETROIT PROFESSOR: "Please correct me. Did I ever call you a Ruckmanite?"

BROTHER CLOUD: You said there is no difference in my position and Ruckman's.

DETROIT PROFESSOR: "It is true that I believe that if one argues for an inerrant KJV then that is pretty much the same as Ruckman."

BROTHER CLOUD: You still haven't answered my question. Would it change anything in regard to how you look upon me if I agreed in every point with Dr. Hills?

DETROIT PROFESSOR: "I'm not sure why you are so concerned about how I 'look' upon you. If you admit that the KJV is not perfect and has errors, I would have to grant you are different than Ruckman. It seems to me that Hills is still some kind of KJV-only in that although he grudgingly admits there are errors in the KJV, he still wants to retain a sort of perfection for the KJV. He says at one point: 'Admittedly the King James Version is not ideally perfect. No translation ever can be. But it is the product of such God-guided scholarship that it is practically perfect.'"

BROTHER CLOUD: I am not concerned about what you think about me. The only judgment that means anything is God's. I was just curious, I guess, about your position. It does strike me as strange when a man who thinks there are no errors in his Bible is considered dangerous, but those who think there are errors in all Bibles are true and wise believers.

DETROIT PROFESSOR: "YES, I DO CONSIDER IT DANGEROUS, BECAUSE ANYONE WHO BELIEVES THAT THERE ARE NO ERRORS IN THEIR PRESENT BIBLE HAS ADOPTED, WHETHER THEY RECOGNIZE IT OR NOT, A HERETICAL POSITION. [emphasis added] The only way your present KJV could be without error is by a miracle of inspiration--God superintending the translators--in the case of the present KJV that would be Dr. Benjamin Blayney in 1769. I know you claim you can get there by preservation, but preservation is not a miraculous work and thus does not result in errorless transmission. I have already pointed out one error in our present KJV, which you cannot refute. I can point out others which cannot be refuted either. I get no pleasure in doing so, but am forced to do so because of your perversion of the doctrine of preservation. These errors are minor and do not change the doctrine taught overall by Scripture. Still it is foolish to pretend that the KJV has no errors. I see that I am now included in your latest mailing about textual criticism and that you are familiar with my article on preservation. If you have read it, you will note that I cite several fundamentalist leaders of the past who hold my position."

BROTHER CLOUD: It is heresy to believe there are no errors in my Bible? Heresy as defined by who or what? Certainly not as defined by the Bible. There is NOTHING in the Bible that would make me think that it would be wrong to have faith in God to believe that He would preserve for me a faith Bible. Just the opposite. You are referring, of course, to heresy as defined by SOME fundamentalists. As for fundamentalist leaders of the past who have held your position, that means nothing to me. I have never denied that there have been fundamentalists who have unwisely defended modern textual criticism, but I also find that to be a meaningless fact. A consensus of fundamentalism on any issue has never been my authority. The term “fundamentalism” is exceedingly broad, so broad as to be almost meaningless. I test “fundamentalists” by the same Bible that I test all others of religious persuasion. The fact is that there have been fundamentalists who have taken both sides of this issue for a long time. It is those who boast that fundamentalists have presented a united face on this issue, and that face has been in favor of the modern versions and of textual criticism, who are wrong and who are twisting history in their attempt to intimidate those who defend the KJV, as I have proven in my video presentation “Fundamentalists of Old Who Stood for the King James Bible.” You and your friends on this issue do not intimidate me. Though I am nothing, I have studied this issue at least as diligently as most other fundamental Baptists, and it has been with a desire to know the truth. I have reasonable intelligence and, more, I am a saved man and I have the Holy Spirit to guide me (1 John 2). God has instructed me to prove all things. That is what I have done with this issue. I have both the divinely-given responsibility and the spiritual privilege to do that.

DETROIT PROFESSOR: “IT IS OBVIOUS FROM WHAT WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN BY GOD THAT PRESERVATION IS NOT MIRACULOUS. [emphasis added] No two Greek manuscripts agree completely. No two editions of the TR agree completely. Miraculous preservation would not permit any error from one copy to the other. You cannot point to a miraculously preserved Greek manuscript or edition of the TR. If you can, please do so.”

BROTHER CLOUD: Where does the Bible say that preservation is not miraculous? I would like to see the scriptural authority for such a bold statement.

DETROIT PROFESSOR: “My point is that your belief is false. People can and do believe all kinds of things about the Bible and they are free to do so, but that does not mean what they believe is correct. I have pointed out to you a clear error in either the KJV or the TR. In Acts 19:20 the KJV has ‘God’ (‘So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed’). The Trinitarian Bible Society Greek New Testament has ‘Lord’ (*kuriou*). Now either the KJV is in error or the TR is in error. You can't have it both ways. You can't say I just take it by faith. Genuine faith must be based on truth. THE TRUTH IS THAT GOD HAS NOT CHOSEN TO PRESERVE THE BIBLE TO OUR DAY WITHOUT ERROR. HE GAVE IT ORIGINALLY WITHOUT ERROR (INSPIRATION), BUT HE HAS ALLOWED THE BIBLE TO BE PRESERVED WITH MINOR ERRORS that do not affect the overall teaching of the doctrines of Scripture. [emphasis added] I can point to some of these minor errors. You simply ignore them. I am not trying to intimidate you. I don't deny you have studied the issue. I just want you to face the facts.”

BROTHER CLOUD: You didn't answer my question for the scriptural authority for your statement that preservation is not miraculous.

Furthermore, you are wrong. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. You test the Bible with the “record.” I test the record with the Bible. Your method is exactly like that which the evolutionists use (“the scientific record does not allow me to believe Genesis literally”) and the higher critic (“the

historical and archeological record does not allow me to believe the O.T. literally”). If you want to go that route, help yourself, but don’t then think you can preach to me about faith and truth.

As for Acts 19:20, if “word of God” is a wrong translation in the KJV, it was affirmed by a great many biblical scholars, beginning with Tyndale through the Matthews the Bishops the Geneva and then through the 50 or so men who went through it again for the 1611. Each of the brilliant KJV translators went through every part of the translation. Now Mr. Contemporary Great Scholar comes along and boasts to me that I am a heretic because I haven’t found any errors in my revered old English Bible and that he can prove that all of those men were wrong. I have better sense than to believe that.

I asked three scholarly fundamental Baptist men about your claim that Acts 19:20 is an error in the KJV. Following are their replies:

The first is from Dr. Thomas Strouse, Dean of the Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary. “I do not think that the lack of precision (God for Lord) is an error. The KJV translators allowed themselves some flexibility in their translation as is evinced in other places (e.g., Rom. 6:2 'God forbid'). It is obviously not an error in the TR and as you pointed out, Wycliff, Tyndale, Rogers and the Geneva Bible treat it as does the KJV. Early commentators such as Henry and Poole do not raise a question about this translation. And why can't we take it by faith? [This man] would rather minister questions than godly edifying (1 Tim. 1:4). His bibliology and text are permeated with problems.”

Dr. Donald Waite, who is a staunch Baptist fundamentalist and a biblical scholar in Greek and Hebrew, makes the following observation about Acts 19:20: “The Lord is also God. And God is also Lord. True, usually KURIOS is translated 'Lord' and THEOS is usually translated 'God.' 'Word of the Lord' probably is a Hebraism carried over from the O.T. which uses this 242 times but only 13 times in the NT. Whereas 'Word of God' is a New Testament favorite, used 44 times, but only 4 times in the OT. I don't see how this bothers Dr. ----- so much. Why doesn't he take a look at one of his favorite perversions, the NIV. My detailed study of the NIV (Bible For Today #1749-P) specifies ADDING nouns for deity 564 times (pp. 13-35); CHANGING nouns for deity 50 times (p. 73-75); and OMITTING nouns for deity 1909 times (pp. 238-246). Or, if he prefers, he could take a detailed look at the NASV. My detailed study of the NASV (BFT #1494-P) specifies ADDING nouns for deity 26 times (pp. 5-6); CHANGING nouns for deity 29 times (pp. 64-65); and OMITTING nouns for deity 100 times (pp. 141-45). Until he can come up with anywhere NEAR these figures for the KJB, he should change the subject fast. Luke 4:23b says it all: ‘. . . Physician, heal thyself . . .’”

Dr. David Brown of the First Baptist Church of Oak Creek, Wisconsin, observes: “It seems to me that this man has strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel. Here's why. First, consider what Strong has to say: *kurios* is from *kuros* (supremacy) which means supreme in authority, i.e. (as noun) controller; by implication, Mr. (as a respectful title):-God, Lord, master, Sir. Secondly, the Septuagint uses *kurios* more than 9000 times. First and foremost *kurios* denotes God's name as is depicted by the tetragrammaton (YHWH) more than 6000 times I might note. Since, like many critical scholars, they hold the LXX in high esteem, will he now shoot himself in the foot by declaring 'God' is a translation error? I must say that in the New Testament *kurios* also functions as the name of God in the Greek. In fact, each person of the Godhead--the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit--is called *kurios*. My point is simply this. God is a perfectly legitimate translation of *kurios*. It denotes authority and supremacy and as I have mentioned already God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are referred to as being *kurios*.”

BROTHER CLOUD CONTINUED: By pointing to the alleged error in Acts 19:20, you are trying to create a smoke screen to make it appear that my position and your position are the same. It doesn't fly. By your own testimony, at the worst my only 'problem' is sorting through a few very minor variations that have no doctrinal significance. That's not a bad position to be in several thousand years after the writing of the first part of the Scriptures and 2,000 years after its completion. Your problem, on the other hand, has to do with thousands of words, with dozens of entire verses, and with changes that do have doctrinal significance. (See our book "Myths about the Modern Bible Versions," for evidence of this.) Your problem is the application of constantly changing theories of textual criticism that were invented by and are still fathered today by men who treat the Bible largely like another book (Griesbach, Westcott and Hort, Aland, Metzger, Martini, Black, etc.). I would urge you to reject modern textual criticism and base your position strictly upon the Word of God instead of upon a 'science falsely so called.' Many men are wisely taking that path these days in spite of all of your attempts to stop that from happening.

By the way, my position does not automatically force me to believe there are no errors in the KJV. The KJV is a translation, a unique and excellent one, but a translation nonetheless. It has not replaced the Greek and Hebrew that God gave supernaturally by holy men of old. It is not advanced revelation or any such thing. I came to my present conclusion about the KJV gradually by a process of considering various challenges like yours about supposed errors in the KJV and then looking at those 'errors' for myself. My conclusion each time is that they are not errors. There are different ways of translating things, but that does not constitute error. If I did find an error in the KJV, it would not change my faith or my position.

That being said, we also know that English is not merely another language and the King James Bible is not merely another translation. It was conceived of and refined in the fires of persecution by a man obviously raised up by God (the masterly William Tyndale) and underwent a unique series of revisions through a period of almost 100 years. When we come to the revision of 1611, the King James translators were truly great scholars and most of them were godly. Unlike today, these men grew up with the biblical languages and Latin. They learned these in their childhood and perfected the use of them throughout their lives. John Bois, to take but one example, could read the whole Bible in Hebrew at age five. This is not true today. Even those who are scholars in the biblical languages today don't usually begin to learn them until their adult years. The KJV translators as a whole were masters not only of Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin but also of all of the cognate or associate languages that are necessary for research into ancient documents relative to the Bible. They further had the ability to read ancient versions of Greek, Latin, German, Italian, and Spanish. The KJV translation process itself was unique. Each part of the Bible went through the hands of all of the six committees. "As the number of companies was six, and the numbers in each company varied from seven to ten, it follows that every several part would be examined at the least fourteen times distinctly; many parts fifteen times, and some seventeen" ("Historical Account of the English Versions of the Scriptures," prologue to *The English Hexapla*, 1841, p. 153).

Thus, when you and others today (who are absolutely NOT the scholars that Tyndale and the Geneva and KJV translators were) so brashly and dogmatically claim errors in the KJV, it amazes me.

I want to say this kindly, but I want to say it, nonetheless. It appears to me that you are far too great in your own eyes. I urge you to come down off of that high horse so the Lord can bless you with spiritual discernment and wisdom. Truth has always resided with the lowly (Prov. 3:34; 11:2; 1 Pet. 5:5).

[For those who want to know more about this subject, I recommend the “Bible Version Issue Question/ Answer Database” at the Way of Life web site. See the Bible Version section of the End Times Apostasy Database -- <http://www.wayoflife.org>.]

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